

Race and the Changing Typifications of NBA Players

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Race and Sport History

- Segregation
- Position “stacking”
- Racially biased media portrayals

Research Question:

In the context of the NBA, are racially biased media portrayals still occurring? How have these racial typifications changed?

Data

- Content analysis of NBA games
 - Between years of 1964 and 2010
 - 15 quarters
 - 174 players
- Season performance statistics

MAIN FINDINGS

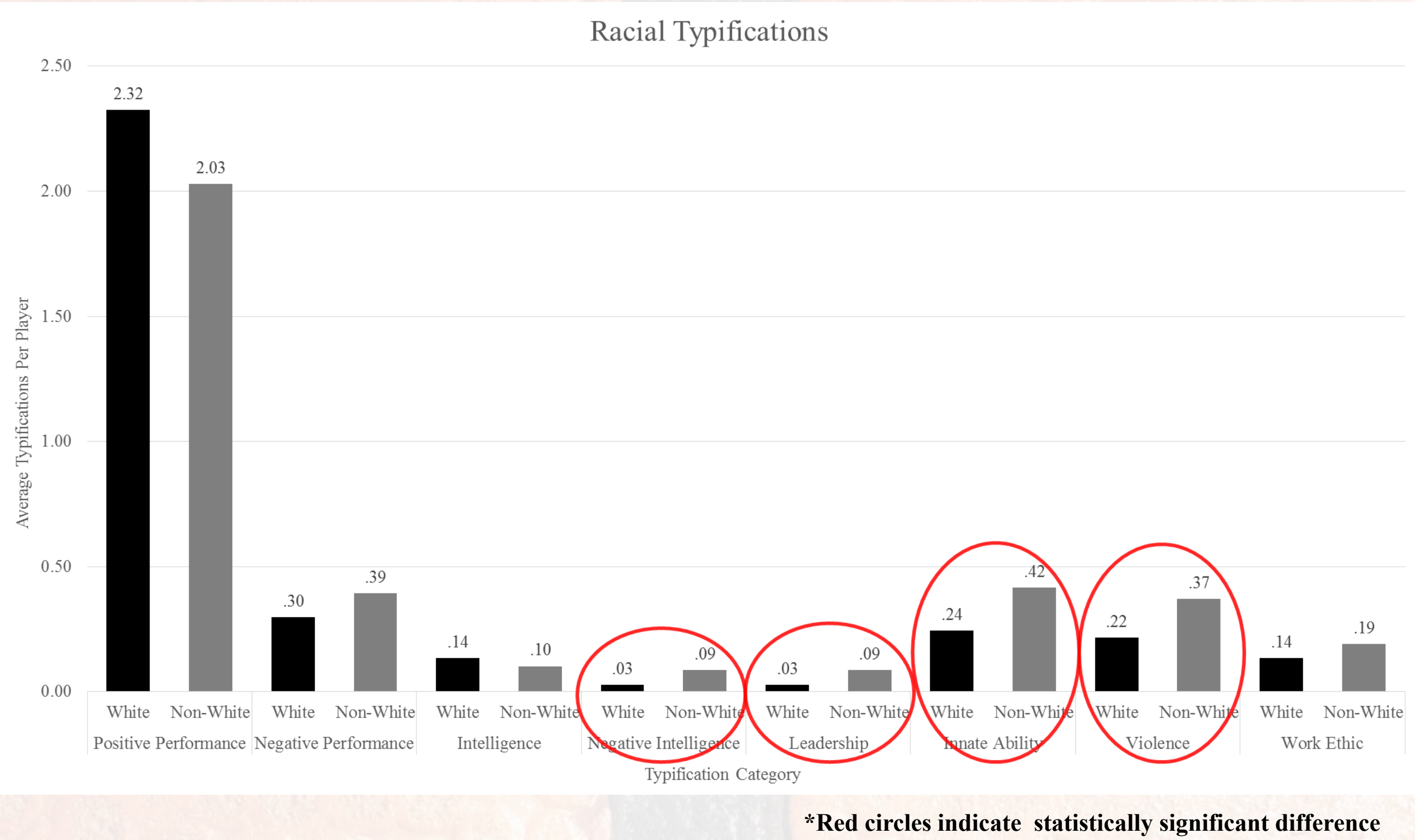
Race Was Never Mentioned

- 4 mentions of country
 - Rik Smits - “the flying Dutchman”
- 1 mention of hair color
 - Jack Sikma - “the blonde bomber”
 - Allusion to whiteness?

Increasing Typifications Over Time

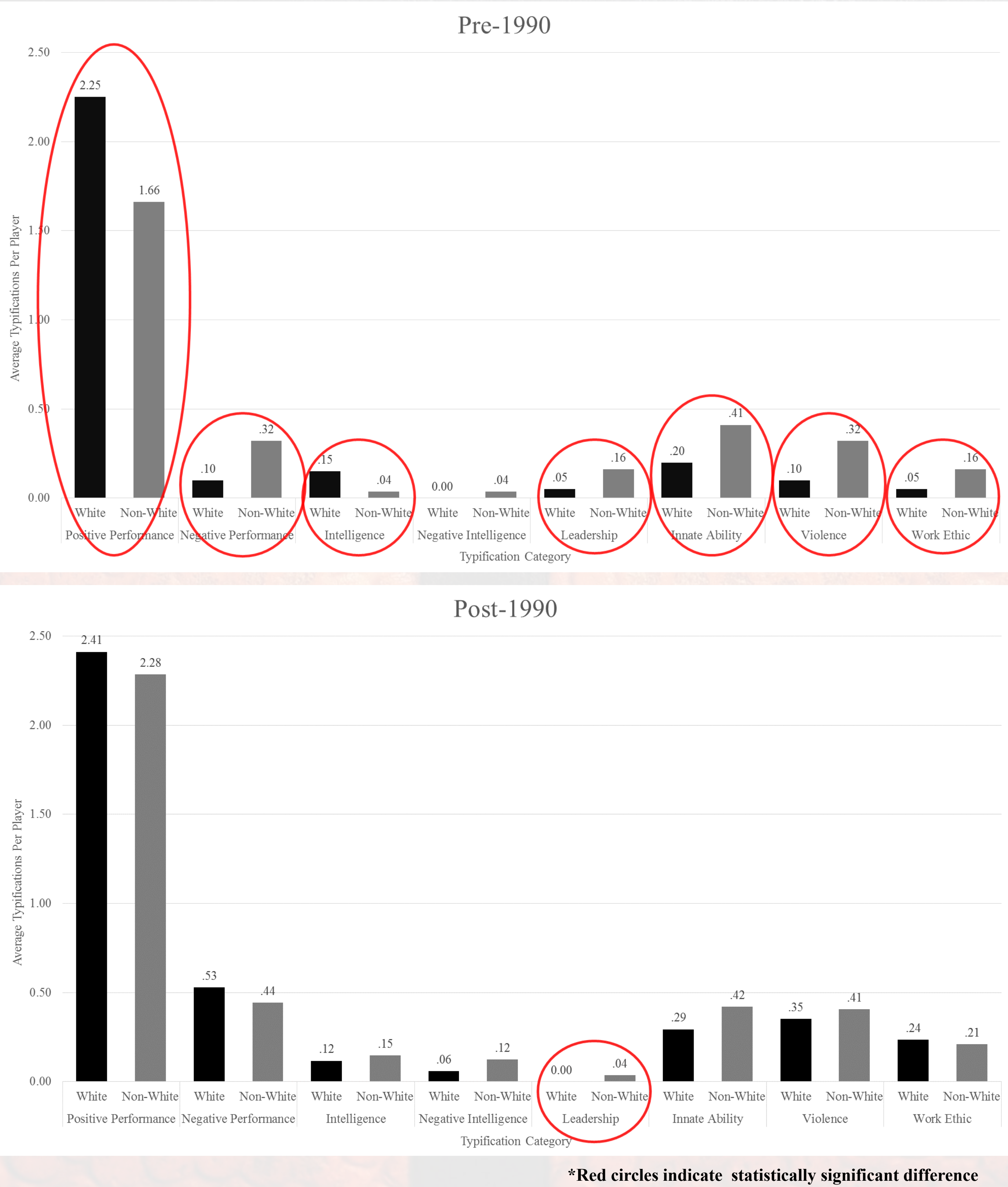
- General increase in typifications
- Comparing across eras
 - Pre 1990 = 1960s through 1980s
 - Post 1990 = 1990s through 2000s
- Increase in all typification categories
 - Except leadership

Racially Biased Typifications



Decreasing Racial Bias Over Time

- Comparing Pre-1990 Era to Post-1990 Era



Further Tests

- Comparison of season statistics
 - White players performed better in:
 - Turnovers and free throw percentage
 - Non-White players performed better in:
 - Points, blocks, steals, assists, rebounds, field goal percentage, player efficiency rating
- Typifications and Player Efficiency Rating (PER)
 - PER is a metric performance statistic
 - Above average PER correlated with increased typifications
 - Still racially biased

Illustrative Quotes

- Violence vs Work Ethic on defense
 - Jack Sikma (white) on defense
 - “Sikma working on him”
 - Wes Unseld (black) on defense
 - “Unseld clawing, scratching, clawing”
- Innate Ability at the free throw line
 - “On the line, Casey Jones. Remarkably quick and strong six-footer”

Theoretical Discussion

- Color-Blind Racism
 - Subtle
 - Institutionalized
 - Non-racial
- Functional Evolutionary Theory
 - Sport as positive force in culture
 - Eradicating racism

For Further Reading, See:

- Doug Hartmann - U of M Sociologist - Race, sport and culture
- Ben Carrington - Sociologist of race and sport
- Eduardo Bonilla-Silva - Sociologist - Color-blind racism